

How the VHA Office of Research and Development (ORD) will use the extra funds from the 2018 Omnibus to advance the health of Veterans:

The 2018 Omnibus Spending Bill provided an additional \$54,262,000 in the Medical and Prosthetics Research Appropriation, bringing the budget to \$722,262,000. Here, ORD highlights initiatives that were made possible because of the additional funds.

Priorities Identified by Congress in the Omnibus:



Learning about how exoskeleton technology can help Veterans with stroke and TBI

Brain injury can leave our Veterans unable to do things that they could prior to the injury. ORD will work to identify the ways in which exoskeleton technology can help regain or compensate for that loss of function. For example, a robotic exoskeleton could help a Veteran regain his or her ability to grasp objects or to walk with a normal gait.



Contributing to the understanding of cancer in Veterans

Treatment for cancer has become very precise and individualized. In order to find the right cancer treatment a given person, we need to have access to a large national database to find out what worked in other people with genetically similar cancers. Because Veterans may have some different types of cancer than the general population, it is important that their de-identified data is represented in these databases. ORD will make sure that these de-identified data from Veterans with cancer make it into these national databases.

ORD will also focus on those Veterans exposed to Agent Orange to understand the potential relationship between that exposure and unusual cancers.



Understanding the effects of Agent Orange exposure among Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans

Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans have been concerned about their possible exposure to Agent Orange and what impact it might have had on their health. ORD will conduct a study to help to shed light on this important question.

Timely Priorities:



Giving Veterans the ability to Choose Home through Caregiver support

ORD will co-fund a VA Center of Excellence aimed at promoting research innovations that allow Veterans the choice to stay in their homes with assistance from the caregivers who support them. The Center will be comprised of an interdisciplinary team who will work together to evaluate the demonstration sites from VA's National Choose Home Moonshot Initiative. The goal is to identify the things that are effective in enhancing the quality of life and well-being of both the Veterans and their caregivers.



Addressing the prosthetic needs of women Veterans with amputations

The current prosthetic ankle-foot combinations typically allow for shoes of just one heel height. ORD will fund the creation of an innovative prosthesis that will allow a person to switch between footwear with different heel heights without needing to change the alignment of the prosthesis.

The tools that are used to measure upper limb prosthesis satisfaction and function were developed for men. To address women-specific concerns, we will create new tools to measure how women feel about their upper limb prostheses and then use these tools in a national study of Veterans with upper limb amputations.

Most people with upper limb amputations are missing a finger. Women typically have smaller hands, so the existing prosthetic fingers often do not work for them. To fill this void, ORD will create a prosthetic finger designed for women using advanced metal 3D printing technology.

Other Priorities:

In addition to the priorities highlighted above, ORD will undertake a series of coordinated projects to: (1) improve Veteran's access to high-quality clinical trials, (2) make sure that the research innovations are used in the real-world care of Veterans, and (3) ensure that we are learning as much as we can from VA data about improving Veterans' health.

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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Office of Research and Development (ORD)